



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
New England District

News release

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Public meetings set for early March

Corps of Engineers to require EIS for Cape Wind's proposed wind farm project in Nantucket Sound

CONCORD, Mass. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will require that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared in response to Cape Wind Associates, LLC proposal to build a wind farm power generation field in Nantucket Sound, Mass.

The Corps' New England District received an application from Cape Wind Associates in late November for a Section 10/404 Individual Permit for the installation and operation of 170 offshore Wind Turbine Generators in federal and state waters off the coast of Massachusetts in Horseshoe Shoals in Nantucket Sound.

"The Corps determined in mid-December that an Environmental Impact Statement will be required for this proposed project, currently the first proposal of its kind in the United States," said Christine Godfrey, the Corps' New England District Regulatory Division chief.

A Notice of Intent detailing the project's purpose and intent will be published in the Federal Register in late January. Public scoping meetings on the proposed project will be held in early March in Boston and on Cape Cod.

The applicant's stated purpose of the project is to generate up to 420 MW of renewable energy that will be distributed to the New England regional power grid, including Cape Cod and the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

The power will be transmitted to shore via a submarine cable system consisting of two 115kV lines to a landfall site in Yarmouth, Mass. The submarine cable system will then interconnect with an underground overland cable system, where it will interconnect with an existing NSTAR 115kV electric transmission line for distribution.

The proposed wind turbine array would occupy approximately 28 square miles in an area of Nantucket Sound known as Horseshoe Shoals between Nantucket Island and the Cape Cod

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Cape Wind EIS/2-2-2-2-2

mainland. The northernmost turbines would be about 4.1 miles from the nearest land mass (Point Gammon), the southeastern most turbines would be about 11 miles from Nantucket, and the westernmost turbines would be about 5.5 miles from Martha's Vineyard.

"The EIS process will be conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidelines," said Sue Holtham, of the Corps' New England District Engineering and Planning Division. The NEPA process ensures that state and federal agencies and the public provide input and are involved in the environmental review process.

The federal EIS process starts with a publication of the project's Notice of Intent in the Federal Register, followed by scoping meetings in the affected area to solicit public input and further define the project's intent and scope.

"All existing relevant data is then collected and reviewed to address issues discussed during scoping," Holtham said. Alternatives are developed, and data gaps identified and assessed to develop data collection needs. Field studies are conducted as appropriate to fill data gaps.

This leads to publication of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for public review and comment during which time public meetings are held to obtain further comments and concerns on the DEIS and on the project. The process continues to the publication of a Final EIS where that is reviewed and comments taken from the public. This then leads to a Record of Decision.

"A Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register in late January," Holtham said. "This is the start of the federal review process. This is a formal announcement of the EIS process which begins with scoping."

The normal time to conduct an EIS is about 18-36 months depending on the complexity of the information that needs to be gathered.

"The Corps will conduct an open scoping and public involvement process during the development of the EIS," said Larry Rosenberg, the Corps' New England District Public Affairs Office chief. "Scoping is the process for determining the range of issues to be addressed and for identifying significant issues or areas that would be analyzed in depth in the EIS. Scoping meetings are open to everyone and the public is encouraged to participate and express their views and concerns."

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The open public scoping meetings are scheduled for: Wednesday, March 6 beginning at 1:30 p.m. (registration to begin at noon) in the JFK Federal Building, Conference Room C, 55 New Sudbury St., Boston, Mass.; and Thursday, March 7 starting at 6:30 p.m. (registration to begin at 5:30 p.m.) in the Mattacheese Middle School, 400 Higgins Crowell Road in West Yarmouth, Mass. Two stenographers will be available at both meetings to record public comments and written statements for the record to be incorporated into the study.

“The scoping meetings with the public and other federal, state, local agencies and groups offer the opportunity to identify concerns and highlight issues to be evaluated in the EIS,” Rosenberg said. “We welcome an open forum and exchange of information throughout this whole EIS process.”

The Corps of Engineers will be the lead federal agency on the federal EIS process. The Corps will work closely with Massachusetts’ officials in conducting its own Environmental Impact Review (EIR) of the project. The product will be a joint EIS/EIR

The EIS is being coordinated with numerous other state and federal agencies. Their input will be included in the EIS.

Significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the EIS will include impacts associated with construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the wind turbines on the following resources: recreational and commercial boating and fishing activities, endangered marine mammals and reptiles, birds, aviation, benthic habitat, aesthetics, cultural resources, radio and television frequencies, ocean currents, and land resources.

Alternatives to be addressed in the EIS will include: the no action alternative; alternative wind park locations, including offshore vs. upland; submarine cable route alternatives; alternative landfall and overland cable route locations; and alternative connections to an NSTAR transmission line.

“The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on the findings of the EIS and based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the proposed activity on the public interest,” Godfrey said. “That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources.”

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Cape Wind EIS/4-4-4-4-4

“The benefits which may reasonably accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments,” Godfrey said. “The EIS process will make all this information available. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects.”

The Draft EIS is anticipated to be available for public review in the summer of 2003. The application for the federal permit was filed with the Corps of Engineers in compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which regulates the discharge or fill of material in United States waters, which includes the territorial seas, and with Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, which provides for federal regulation of any work in, under or over navigable waters of the United States.

The proposed 170 wind turbines themselves and the interconnecting electrical cables would be outside of the three-mile limit and are therefore outside of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts jurisdiction. Normally, Section 10 only applies out to the limits of the territorial seas. However, under the provisions of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) anyone proposing such structures on the continental shelf must obtain a permit from the Corps of Engineers under Section 10.

The complete Notice of Intent can be viewed on the Federal Register website starting on or about Jan. 29 at http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html.

The Corps’ Public Notice on the Cape Wind project and scoping meetings will be available online at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/reg/pubnot.htm>.

To assist in properly evaluating the proposal, the Corps of Engineers will begin soliciting public comments at the scoping meetings in early March. Written statements should be forwarded to Brian E. Valiton at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751.